

Town of Mount Olive
June 14, 2024
Special Board Meeting
Minutes

Mayor Jerome Newton called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M. Those in attendance per roll call were Mayor Pro-Tempore Barbara Kornegay, Commissioner Delreese Simmons, Commissioner Tommy Brown, Commissioner Vicky Darden, Town Attorney Carroll Turner Town Manager Jammie Royall and Town Clerk/Administrative Assistant Sherry Davis.

Mayor Jerome Newton delivered our invocation and Commissioner Tommy Brown lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Jerome Newton requested a motion to grant Commissioner Danny Keel an excused absence for this meeting. Commissioner Tommy Brown made the motion. Mayor Pro-Tempore Barbara Kornegay seconded and the motion passed 4-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton read the Conflict of Interest Statement; there were no conflicts.

Mayor Jerome Newton requested a motion to approve the published agenda. Commissioner Tommy Brown made the motion to accept the published agenda. Commissioner Vicky Darden seconded and the motion passed 4-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton then requested a motion to go into the Public Hearing regarding the Proposed 2024/2025 Budget, Town Manager's Budget Message and Budget Ordinance. Commissioner Tommy Brown made the motion to go into the public hearing. Mayor Pro-Tempore Barbara Kornegay seconded and the motion passed 4-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton reminded everyone to keep their comments to three minutes. Fire Chief Greg Wiggins was the first to speak. He feels if this budget is passed as it is, it will be catastrophic to the fire department as we know it. Three fire tax commissioners and our five- year capital improvements plan will be affected. In this plan they have reserve for unit 7, 6, 23 and a new brush truck. They have applied for a \$200,000.00 grant with a \$5,000.00 match to be paid from Waylin funds. A new brush truck, tankard and airport crash vehicle total over \$1,000,000.00 and we would be able to pay cash. The land we have purchased, the station upgrades, twenty one volunteers totals \$1,000,000.00 to replace. We are in a position to match grants. This funding comes from Wayne and Duplin Counties Fire tax. We have a duty to our citizens to provide trust funded at a level they deserve and are accustomed to.

Ms. Cindy Bell of 109 Ramble Wood Drive, Mount Olive, NC 28365 said to Town Attorney Carroll Turner that she loves the flower pots downtown and supports the fire department. She asked the board to please reconsider. The other concerns she has are the airport budget was not shown online, hourly employees are not getting a raise, tax rates and water/sewer rates are being raised and the Town needs ARPA funding to balance the budget. Contracts exists and property taxes can't be used. This budget shows \$700,000.00 worth of contracted services. We need to cut the cost of gas. She said look at what you do carefully at each line item.

Mr. Ed Cromartie of 313 West James Street, Mount Olive, NC 28365. He said hello to everyone and stated since 2019 he has worked on his property and paid with blood, sweat and tears. He went by the Wayne County Tax Office this morning and they are also increases taxes by eight cents. Last year you wanted a seven and ½ cents increase. There was a \$1,500.00 bonus to employees by raising trash fees and sewer rates. You are continuing to collect the increase from last year so they should provide funds for employees. You need to factor in these increases from last year and use for the things you committed to. The Wayne County property tax re-evaluation is next year and expected to increase by forty percent. His house will not be worth what they are charging him for it. He said the Town is heading for a lawsuit and that is not a threat it is a promise.

Mr. Gerald Bell said he was concerned about the CDBG – Neighborhood Grant recipients. An improved house will be a burden to them and increase their taxes.

Commissioner Delreese Simmons advised Mr. Ed Cromartie the \$1,500.00 bonus came from ARPA funding not increased rates. He just wanted to correct what he said. Mr. Ed Cromartie responded if you are getting the proceeds it is being used for that. Commission Delreese Simmons stated the Town will not be receiving the ARPA funding next year.

Commissioner Delreese Simmons made a motion to amend because this budget is illegal.

Ms. Annette Kirby thanked everyone who worked on the budget. She stated it took three of them twelve hours to go over this budget line by line. She said the revenues in red are confusing and by her calculation the budget is not balanced, there is an excess of three million dollars. The airport budget was not visible anywhere. She is a former ER nurse and volunteered with Mount Olive Rescue for eight years. Volunteers are the heart of this town. Employees making \$14.00 per hour should be making \$15.00 per hour. The Town has millions of dollars of grants and there are at least thirteen open at this time. The Town needs citizen advisement. The most up to date salary study is 2019 and that is apparent today. We would like to find constructive ways to help. We are trying to help no find fault. We need more transparency regarding grants, you need to show the public what you are doing. The Powell Bill fund is balanced and the budget shows where these funds are appropriated. Citizens have asked to pave Center Street or at lease stripe the parking spaces.

Mr. Ed Cromartie asked if Wayne County is still contributing \$33,000.00 per year to the Mount Olive Airport. Mayor Pro-Tempore Barbara Kornegay answered yes they are. Mr. Ed Cromartie just wanted to make sure they were still sending.

Town Attorney Carroll Turner wanted to respond to Mr. Ed Cromartie's comment regarding the property tax re-evaluation. He advised the re-evaluation will not appear until next year's budget. He stated if you go back and look ten years ago our board actually reduced property tax rate to mitigate the re-evaluation rates from Wayne County. Mr. Ed Cromartie responded that he appreciates that clarification. Ms. Annette Kirby commented insurance goes up as well.

Mayor Jerome Newton asked if anyone else wished to speak. No one did. He thanked everyone for their time and comments. He advised all comments will be taken into consideration at our next budget workshop on Thursday, June 20, 2024 at 2:00 P.M. The location will be the Town Hall Conference Room. The public is invited.

Mayor Jerome Newton requested a motion to come out of the public hearing and back into regular session. Mayor Pro-Tempore Barbara Kornegay made the motion. Commissioner Vicky Darden seconded and the motion passed 4-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Action-Memo – 06-39 Considering scheduling Special Board Meeting on Thursday, June 27, 2024 at 2:00 P.M. Mayor Jerome Newton requested a motion to approve. Mayor Pro-Tempore Barbara Kornegay made the motion to approve Action-Memo – 06-39. Commissioner Tommy Brown seconded and the motion passed 4-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton advised that may be moved to a later time but everyone will be notified. He thanked everyone for coming.

There being no further business Commissioner Tommy Brown made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Vicky Darden seconded and the motion passed 4-0.

Our next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 1, 2024 at 6:00 P.M. in the board meeting room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jerome Newton
Mayor

Sherry Davis
Administrative Assistant/Town Clerk